

Investing in you. Investing in our future

September 10, 2013

Dear Fine Arts Faculty and Staff,

This afternoon, the Board of Trustees approved our proposal to move forward with the renovation of University Lofts – the facility that will become the new academic home for classrooms, studios, office and support space for the College of Fine Arts.

An investment of dollars in new or renovated space is not, of course, the only way we demonstrate our priorities. But it is one way we show what we value as an institution and on behalf of the many communities we serve.

In the case of the University Lofts, today's measure reflects an almost doubling of the investment we are making in this facility – from the \$8 million initially planned in 2011 to the \$15 million project approved today. In addition, the Board also approved the renovation of the Schmidt Vocal Arts Center, the result of \$1.7 million in gifts and the allocation of internal savings. We also will be spending up to \$4.5 million, as part of earlier legislative authorization, to upgrade the mechanical systems -- air handling units, temperature controls, exhaust fans and other necessary repairs and work -- in the College of Fine Arts main building.

Collectively, the university will be spending more than \$20 million on new facilities as well as critical renovations and repairs to existing space in the College. My thanks to Dean Michael Tick for his diligence and strong advocacy in working to improve the physical space in our College of Fine Arts.

At University Lofts, the increase in project scope reflects additional analysis that determined expansions were necessary for HVAC, communications, plumbing, electrical and other systems along with upgrades and renovations for the space to maximize the experience of our students, faculty and staff. The result, though long overdue, will be state-of-the-art classroom and studio space for faculty and students and more modern office and support rooms for teachers and staff. This new facility, which also further cements our connection with downtown Lexington, will replace the Reynolds Building, a decades-old tobacco warehouse and process facility, first acquired by UK in 1962. The renovation of the new facility will also promote sustainability while preserving the historical integrity of the building.

Our university, in recent years, has become known throughout the state and in remote corners of the world for our excellence in the arts – from symphonies in China and arias and operas for high school students throughout Kentucky to new dramas that tell the plight of veterans to sculpture and art that touch our souls.

The arts are part of who we are and essential to what we want to be as an institution. The additional investment approved today is but one way – one very important way – we reflect those values and aspirations.

I am humbled and excited to be your colleague as we seek to support the work you do and the artistry you create.